Comm-PASS

NAVIGATING COMM-PASS

COMMONWEALTH PROCUREMENT ACCESS
AND
SOLICITATION SYSTEM

USER GUIDE

Produced by the Executive Office for Administration and Finance and the Operational Services Division

About This Manual

NAVIGATING COMM-PASS is intended for use by any business enterprise interested in the selling or marketing of goods and/or services to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

<u>The manual is divided into five sections</u>:

- **Section One** provides a brief overview of Massachusetts Procurement Reform

- **Section Two** describes the Commonwealth's Procurement Access and Solicitation System (Comm-PASS), an Internet-based tool, and the benefits that it provides to the Vendor Community, the Commonwealth, and to women and minority owned business enterprises

- **Section Three** defines some basic Internet terminology and provides a description of the equipment and systems requirements for accessing Comm-PASS.

- **Section Four** leads the reader step-by-step through each component of the Comm-PASS system

- **Section Five** provides a *Troubleshooting Reference* and *Resource Guide* to help you get connected to, and effectively using Comm-PASS

Navigating Comm-PASS

Table of Contents

I. Procurement Reform: An Overview

Since the initial implementation of procurement legislation nearly 75 years ago, several evolutions have occurred within Massachusetts state purchasing, but none as dramatic as the changes being implemented through the establishment of the new procurement regulations, 801 CMR 21.00, and the policies set forth in the Policies and Procedures Handbook. Among other things, procurement reform serves to:

→ **Maximize the Commonwealth's Buying Capabilities**
→ **Streamline and Simplify the Procurement Process**
→ **Encourage Participation and Foster Competition**
→ **Provide Flexibility and Accessibility**

Under procurement reform, the Operational Services Division (OSD) **will be working in partnership with other state Agencies** to develop vigorous contracts that meet the purchaser's needs without undo burden to the responding vendors. As a result, procurements will now be conducted in an improved **customer and business friendly environment.** Some key components of the reform initiative follow:

◆ Through **increased communication and managed teamwork**, the Commonwealth has successfully replaced the previously complex network of cumbersome regulations.

◆ The consolidation of statewide contracts into **sixteen comprehensive OSD procurement groups** simplifies the search for specific solicitations, making them more **accessible** and increasing the potential for use.

◆ Through the development of a highly skilled team of procurement specialists, representing a cross-section of Departments, the state will provide **knowledgeable technical assistance** to both vendors and purchasers.

◆ Via the changed focus to **"best value"** purchases, Departments are now capable of pursuing procurements that achieve a balance of interests by developing solicitation evaluation criteria that measures factors beyond cost. This new focus provides Bidders with **greater flexibility in proposing alternative solutions**, thereby creating a "Win-Win" situation for both vendors and purchasers.

◆ Through the careful drafting of procurement language, the Commonwealth will further **encourage the participation of qualified, historically underutilized business enterprises**; promoting additional and strong business partnerships and a greater exchange of information.

◆ In **streamlining the procurement process**, the Commonwealth encourages stable, high quality Vendors to pursue business with the Departments.

◆ Through the use of the new Internet-based Commonwealth Procurement Access and Solicitation System (Comm-PASS), the Commonwealth has created a **comprehensive and universal method of communicating** its procurement rules, regulations, solicitations, and contracts to a diverse Bidder audience.

For a complete description of the procurement reform program, and related procurement regulations (801 CMR 21.00), please consult the Commonwealth of Massachusetts *Procurement Policies and Procedures Handbook.* For your convenience, the Handbook is available for download via the Comm-PASS Internet site. A complete description of the connection to and use of Comm-PASS follows.

II. What is Comm-PASS?

**Commonwealth Procurement Access and Solicitation System
(Comm-PASS)**

⇒ An electronic database of information in which the Commonwealth and its political subdivisions can advertise procurement opportunities to an ever increasing audience

⇒ Part of the Commonwealth's ongoing effort to improve access to procurement opportunities and information about the procurement process

⇒ A system which will offer solicitations for goods and services from over 75 state agencies, representing over a billion dollars in business opportunities, via the Internet's World Wide Web

⇒ A program that may be viewed to obtain purchasing information, or downloaded and printed so that a bid response may be rendered

Comm-PASS will include:

- All State Solicitations over $50,000
- Access to all Active State Contracts
- Announcements of Contract Awards
- All information needed to become a Vendor with the State
- Access to State Procurement Regulations
- Answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- "Hot Links" to Other State Web Sites
- Special Announcements

Who Will Comm-PASS Serve?

→ **The general public**

→ **Vendors**
- Large and Small
- Minority and Women Owned Businesses

→ **State and Local Government**

→ **Businesses that supply goods/services within any of the following procurement groups:**

| Operational Services Division	Massachusetts Highway Department	Division of Capital Planning & Operations
Animals and Animal Supplies	Asbestos Removal	Building Study Services
Clothing and Toiletries	Bridge Construction	Construction Bids
Facilities	Catch Basin Cleaning	Construction Management
Financial Management	Chemical Storage Sheds	Cost Estimating
Food	Crack Sealing	Environmental Consulting
Hospital Supplies & Equipment	Demolition	Final Design Services
Human Resource Services	Drawbridge Maintenance	Leased Space
Information Technology	Drilling & Boring	Legal Services
Legal Support Services	Guard Rail & Fencing	Property Acquisition
Manufacturing	Hazardous Waste Remediation	Property Appraisal
Medicines and Medical Supplies	Highway Construction	Property Disposition
Office Equipment & Supplies	Highway Maintenance	Property Management
Petroleum Products, Fuels	Highway Sweeping	Title Examination Services
Public Safety	Impact Attenuators	
Recreational and Educational Supplies	Intelligent Transportation Systems	
Surplus Property	Landscaping & Roadside Development	
Vehicles	Lighting & Electrical	
	Marine Construction	
	Mowing & Spraying	
	Painting (structural)	
	Pavement Markings	
	Excavated Soils Reclamation	
	Sewer and Water	
	Structural Signing	
	Surfacing	
	Traffic Signals	
	Tunnels	
	Underground Tank Removal	
	Utilities	

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Vendor Benefits

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Comm-PASS will:

⇒ Provide convenient on-line access to solicitation documents and contract awards - twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week

⇒ Allow vendors to download current solicitation documents, standardized contracts, procurement regulations, and the Policies and Procedures Handbook to their desktops

⇒ Supply search capability for Bidders to use in identifying minority and/or women owned business enterprises via a link to the SOMWBA Directory; and Keyword search capability against both RFR and Contract documents

⇒ Provide for on-line Vendor Registration by solicitation thereby eliminating unnecessary telephone calls, manual forms and mailing time (available Fall 1996)

⇒ Assist the business community in networking and selling products and services by allowing Bidders to register their interest as either a Prime or a Subcontractor, and to search for other Vendors interested in a particular solicitation (available Fall 1996)

⇒ Provide a state-wide network of public access sites to accommodate individuals and businesses that do not have Internet connectivity

⇒ Offer a "hotline" phone service that features a trained, dedicated Help Desk staff

Benefits to the Commonwealth
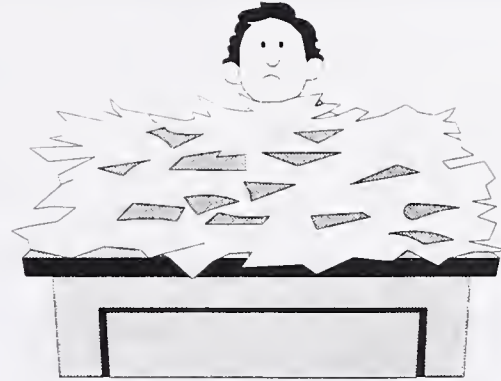
Comm-PASS will:

⇒ Increase the bidding audience for competitive solicitations as a result of the Internet's World Wide Web

⇒ Support and strengthen the Commonwealth's commitment to reduce the reliance on paper usage wherever possible

⇒ Represent a significant cost savings as paper usage and postal expenses are reduced

⇒ Provide on-line access to government entities and political subdivisions to view RFR opportunities, current state contracts, historic solicitation information, and solicitation-driven registered Vendor lists

⇒ Eliminate unnecessary administrative tasks, thereby allowing Departments and OSD to focus on developing and conducting "Best Value" procurements while providing enhanced Vendor support

Socio-Economic Programs

Through its Procurement Reform initiative, Massachusetts looked to develop policies that would support the Commonwealth's socio-economic goals, while streamlining and improving the procurement process itself. As a result, the newly published Procurement Principals look to "foster competition and provide access to a larger pool of potential bidders." Under the reform initiative, Requests for Response (RFRs) are drafted to encourage the participation of qualified minority and women (MBE) business enterprises, small businesses or firms owned or controlled by socially or economically disadvantaged individuals or individuals with disabilities, and environmentally friendly businesses.

Comm-PASS, as the electronic tool supporting Procurement Reform, offers a number of opportunities for both broadening the participation base, as well as for fostering relationships between large and small, and MBE and non-MBE vendors.

⇒ Comm-PASS in providing extensive capabilities for viewing RFRs, awards and contracts, and via the development of state-wide public access sites, will provide a broader-based Bidder target audience.

⇒ In providing a link to the enhanced SOMWBA directory, Comm-PASS will greatly improve the ability of non-MBE businesses to easily identify and develop potential MBE partnerships.

⇒ The implementation of the enhanced Comm-PASS site (Fall 1996) will provide the capability for Vendors to register their interest in bidding as a Prime or a Subcontractor, and to easily access a listing of other interested parties. This capability will serve to foster additional Prime/Subcontractor business relationships.

The building of new business relationships helps the partnering enterprises to expand their base of expertise, and to pool their resources in an effort to be more competitive and to provide better service to the Commonwealth. Additionally, the building of strong business partnerships, and the easy exchange of information, promotes efficiency and growth; creating a "Win-Win" situation for the Commonwealth and the Vendor Community.

III. Internet Background for the Curious

WHAT IS THE INTERNET?

The Internet is a collection of information stored in computers physically located throughout the world. These computers make up a series of networks linked together into an exhaustive "network of networks" that comprise the Internet. Until recently the Internet was difficult to access and fairly confusing to navigate. The development of a number of user-friendly online services (AOL, CompuServe, etc.), and the World Wide Web, allow new users to easily access and explore the wonders of the Internet.

WHAT IS THE WORLD WIDE WEB?

The World Wide Web, or WWW, is one facet of the Internet consisting of client and server computers handling multimedia documents known as Web pages or sites. Client computers use browser software (such as Netscape Navigator or the Internet Explorer) to view graphics-based documents stored on a Server. Each Web page provides a number of items called "links" (underlined items, icons, etc.) that can be selected via a mouse click to retrieve new pages. Thus, upon accessing a starting Web page, moving around the Internet using existing links becomes easy.

WHAT IS AN INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDER (ISP)?

An ISP, or Internet Service Provider, will supply you with a local phone number to dial the necessary software for connecting to the Internet. General service providers (America On-line, CompuServe, Prodigy, etc.) offer services such as e-mail and file download capabilities along

with Internet access. Overall, however, the pricing and level of service provided by an ISP can vary widely. New users are encouraged to begin with one of the larger general service providers, in order to have access to a full range of Help Desk support services, as well as the extremely friendly user-interface that they provide.

WHAT IS A BROWSER?

A browser is a software package that reads and displays Web pages. Netscape Navigator, for example, is a popular browser that can be used with Macs, Unix or PCs, while Microsoft's Internet Explorer is a Windows-based tool. Most ISPs will provide you with a browser, or you can purchase a browser from a software dealer. Additionally, some browsers are available as shareware that can be downloaded from the Internet. The general service ISPs include a browser with their start-up software, easing the installation process for a new user.

WHAT IS A URL?

A URL, or Uniform Resource Locator, is a fancy word for the addresses that the network servers use to locate and display Web pages. In selecting a link, you tell the browser to access the link's address to use in connecting to the host server and to access the requested document.
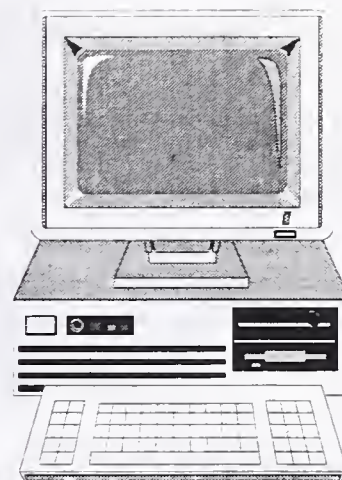
The Comm-PASS URL is: **http://www.Magnet.State.MA.US/Comm-PASS/.**

Accessing Comm-PASS: System Requirements

Personal Computer (PC)

The PC can be either an IBM compatible or an Apple Macintosh

The PC will be the terminal that you use to access the Internet. The faster your PC the more capable it will be in formatting and displaying the information available in the Internet.

Modem

The modem is the device that allows your PC to communicate with other computers over a phone line. Modem speed is measured in bits per second (BPS) or kilo bits per second (KBPS). We recommend that you buy the fastest Hayes compatible modem that you can afford.
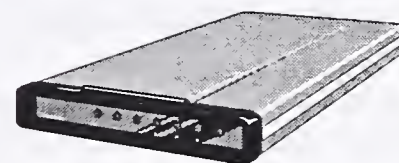
Your hardware dealer can guide you in installing and using your modem.

Printer

To print downloaded documents you will need a printer that is compatible for use with your PC. Your hardware dealer can assist you in selecting the best printer and in configuring your PC to use it.

You will also need:

An Internet Connection purchased through an Internet service Provider (ISP). The place to start looking for an ISP is in the Yellow Pages under <u>On-Line Service Provider.</u>

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Navigating Comm-PASS

An Internet Browser is the software that reads data from the Internet and displays it in a format you can read. Most ISPs will provide you with a browser, or you may purchase a browser from a software dealer. Whatever browser you use it must support Hyper-text Markup Language, version 2 (HTML-2). Additional information about ISPs, and browsers can be found in the previous section, *Internet Background*.

Adobe Acrobat Reader is free software available via the Internet that will allow you to view, navigate, and print the Portable Document (PDF) files that Comm-PASS uses. OSD chose the Adobe software because it is portable across PC, Macintosh, and Unix platforms; because it is easy to use; and because it is available free as downloadable shareware. Additional information about downloading and using the Acrobat Reader can be found in Section Five, *Troubleshooting Tips*.

Minimum Configuration

The suggested minimum configurations presented below are necessary to achieve "reasonable" performance. You may be able to connect to and browse the Internet with fewer system resources, but you will most likely experience slow performance.

If you are considering the purchase of a new PC, please consider both the recommended configuration guidelines, as well as the competing system requirements of other software that you may plan on using.

| PC Type	Minimum Processor	Operating System	Hard Disk Space	RAM	Modem Speed
IBM Compatible	386SX	Windows 3.1 +	540MB	4MB	14.4 Kbps
	386	OS-2	540MB	8MB	14.4 Kbps
Apple Macintosh	68020	Macintosh System 7 or MACOS	540MB	4MB	14.4 Kbps

♻ Printed on Recycled Paper

Public Access Sites

For persons or businesses that do not have a PC or Internet connectivity, there is a state-wide network of public access sites available for accessing Comm-PASS. Many of the existing sites are equipped with a PC, an Internet connection, and a laser printer, while some are information only sites All sites will have copies of the *Navigating Comm-PASS User Guide,* and a staff representative available to assist you in understanding and using the site. These access points are located around the Commonwealth in representative locations including:

- ◊ **Chambers of Commerce**
- ◊ **Business Development Centers**
- ◊ **Community Development Centers**
- ◊ **Community Colleges and State Universities**

To find an Access Site in your area, please call our toll-free number:

◊ *Hotline # - 1 (888) - MASTATE (627- 8283)*
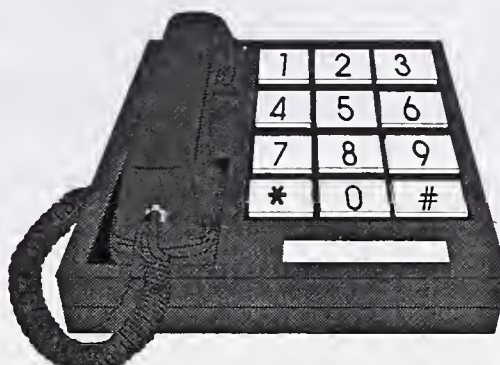
For more information, a descriptive profile of each Access Site can be found on Comm-PASS at: **www.magnet.state.ma.us/comm-pass/**

IV. Accessing and Using Comm-PASS
    A step by step Guide

To access Comm-PASS use your Internet Browser and type the Comm-PASS URL* :

http://www.MAGNet.state.MA.US/Comm-PASS/

Press **Enter**

Upon pressing Enter, the **Comm-PASS Main Menu** appears. This menu provides the seven links offered by the Comm-PASS Home Page. While you may select any of the seven options, we recommend that new users begin with the *Introduction* and *Vendor Information* pages.

<u>Comm-PASS MAIN MENU (INDEX)</u>

Notice that the menu items are blue and underlined. As you access an item, the color of the print turns from blue to purple. This change in color helps you to keep track of where you have been as you move around the system.

Regardless of which option you select, each option functions in the same way.

Position the cursor either on one of the blue bullets, or the corresponding written description, and click the left button on the mouse. Notice that as you move the arrow to either the blue bullets or the corresponding written description the arrow becomes a hand with a pointing index finger. The index finger indicates that you have reached a point of access.

* Each Browser has its own convention, but most will refer to the URL input area as Location or Address.
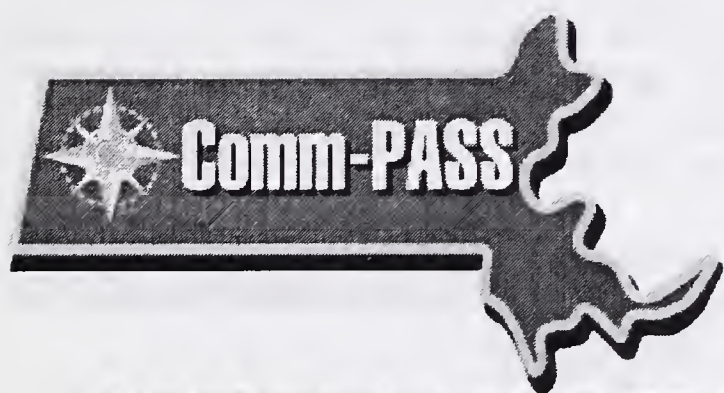
Comm-PASS

Commonwealth
Procurement
Access &
Solicitation
System

- **Introduction**
  Explanation of Comm-PASS
- **Current Open Solicitations**
  Select Bid Opportunities that are currently open
- **Vendor Information**
  View Vendor Handbooks as well as various standard bid and/or contract attachments
- **Vendor Registration**
  Register as a Vendor. Vendors may be required to register to be eligible to bid.
- **Search for Bids**
  Search for Bids based upon text in the bid document
- **Current Contracts**
  Listing of Current Contracts
- **S.O.M.W.B.A.**
  State Office of Minority & Women Business Assistance

Index | Vendor Information | Current Solicitations | Current Contracts | Search for Bids

E-Mail: Comm-PASS@state.ma.us

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Navigating the Comm-PASS Web Page
   Some Generic Tips

Once you have begun to navigate the Comm-PASS pages, you will find that the functionality is consistent throughout. At the bottom of each page are five boxes (icons). These icons provide short cuts which allow you to easily move around the system. Below each icon you will find the name of the page that it represents. The first icon (with the map of Massachusetts), for example, will always return you to the Main Menu, the second to Vendor Information, etc.

The first choice on the Main Menu itself is the *Introduction*. To select it position the arrow either on the word INTRODUCTION or on the blue bullet to the left of the word and click the left mouse button.

Introduction

The Introduction page provides:

➢ Summary information about Comm-PASS
➢ Comm-PASS project goals
➢ A description of current and future functionality
➢ A discussion of Vendor responsibilities

The Introduction also provides you with a direct link to Comm-PASS E-MAIL; the toll free Help Desk telephone number; and our mailing address here at the Comm-PASS project.

Current Open Solicitations

Open Solicitations are separated into the three purchasing agencies: the Operational Services Division (OSD), the Division of Capital Planning and Operations (DCPO), and the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD).
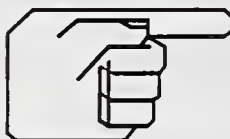
Clicking on one of the three available links will take you to a page that has a link and description of each of that Department's procurement categories.

Comm-PASS

Commonwealth
Procurement
Access &
Solicitation
System

Open Solicitations

Select the Department for which you'd like to view a list of purchasing categories.

- **Operational Services Division**

- **Division of Capital Planning & Operation**

- **Massachusetts Highway Department**

Index | Vendor Information | Current Solicitations | Current Contracts | Search for Bids

E-Mail: Comm-PASS@state.ma.us

Current Open Solicitations (cont).

An underlined procurement category indicates that open solicitations are available for viewing and downloading. Please note that new solicitations, or amendments to existing solicitations, may be posted at any time.

Comm-PASS
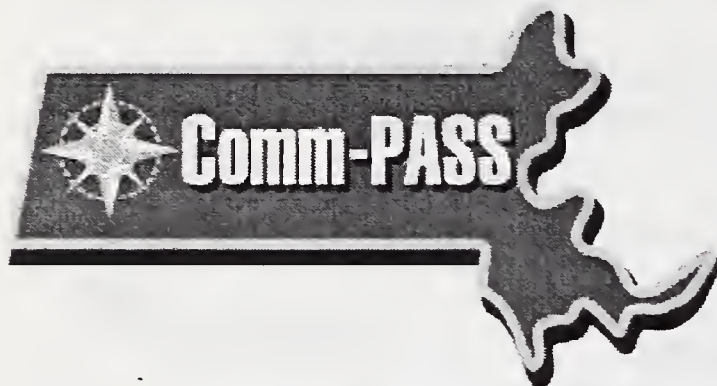
Commonwealth Procurement Access & Solicitation System

Operational Services Division
Open Solicitations

- **Animals & Animal Supplies**
  Livestock & related products and services such as feed, bedding, veterinary services, and general supplies

- **Clothing & Toiletries**
  Garments, health & personal care products

- **Facility - Materials, Repairs, Operations**
  Products & Services related to the operation & maintenance of real property (e.g. cleaning products, building materials, trade work, etc.)

- **Financial Management**
  Services such as auditing, bond servicing, debt collection, etc..

etc.

Upon selecting a solicitation category such as Financial Management or Information Technology, Comm-PASS will provide you with information about, and a link to, each open solicitation within that category. This information, as illustrated on the next page, includes: the Title, Bid Number, Post Date (the date the solicitation was released), the Close Date, and the Last Change Date for each solicitation. **Vendors must check the Last Change Date periodically to ensure that they have the most current version of the Request for Response (RFR).**

Comm-PASS

Commonwealth Procurement Access & Solicitation System

Operational Services Division
Information Technology
Open Solicitations

Title

Bid #	Post Date	Close Date		Last Change	
Workflow and Document Management Products and Services					
1100-11951-6	7/1/96	7/15/96	5:52pm	7/10/96	10:37am
Sample Solicitation Entry					
97-OSD-0001	7/17/96	8/15/96	12:01pm	8/14/96	4:34 pm

Index | Vendor Information | Current Solicitations | Current Contracts | Search for Bids

E-Mail: Comm-PASS@state.ma.us

Current Open Solicitations (cont).

The final Open Solicitation page provides additional information about the selected solicitation including: the Contact Person, Contact Telephone Number, and a direct e-mail link to the Contact. Additionally, this page may provide Estimated Contract Value, and a summary description of the RFR itself. Finally, this page provides the list of files that are available for downloading directly from the site. The types of files that can be downloaded include: attachments, amendments, cost tables, and listings of interested bidders.

The files available for downloading can be viewed and printed using the Adobe Acrobat ® viewer. This shareware is available via download from the Internet. For help with downloading and using the viewer software, please refer to the Section V, *Troubleshooting Guide*.

Vendor Information

The third link offered by the Comm-PASS main menu provides access to a full range of information and links to related sites.

➢ How to use Comm-PASS
Including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

➢ Standard Documents (contracts, handbooks, etc.)

➢ Links to other Massachusetts Departments and Databases
Including the SOMWBA Directory

➢ Links to Other State Web Sites

Vendor Registration

Beginning in the Fall 1996, you will be able to use this new feature to register once, and only once, for all your business with the state. In order to register you must provide:

➢ Your name
➢ DBA name
➢ Tax ID
➢ Contact Person Name
➢ Contact Person Title
➢ Address
➢ E-mail Address
➢ Telephone Number
➢ Fax Number

You will also enter a **Password** of your choice. This password will allow you to access all Procurement documents and information upon registration.
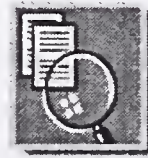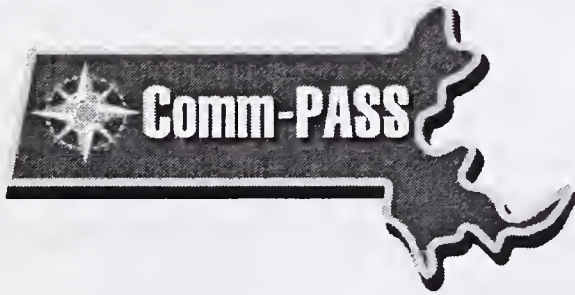
⦿ Search for Bids

If you are unsure of which department may have released a solicitation, or the precise title of a solicitation, the fifth Main Menu option, *Search for Bids* allows you to search the text of existing solicitations by keyword.

To use the search capability simply move to the input area after the word *Keywords*: type an appropriate search option (such as workflow), and click on the **Begin Search** button.

Search for Bids

Keywords: [   ]   ● Bids   ○ Contracts

[**Begin Search**]

The Keyword search will result in the display of the List of Open Solicitations that includes the Title, Bid Number, Post Date (the date the solicitation was released), the Close Date, and the Last Change Date for each solicitation. As before, you may select the links on this page to select and view a specific solicitation.

⦿ Current Contracts

The sixth link on the Main Menu, Current Contracts, mirrors the navigation discussed above under Open Solicitations. Thus, in selecting this link you will be able to "drill down" to your specific request via the following navigation:

1. Select the appropriate procurement agency - OSD, DCPO, or MHD

2. Select the appropriate procurement category

3. Review and select from the Awarded Contract List - the information on this list includes: the Contract Title, Contract Number, Contract Post Date, and Contract Close Date

Upon locating the appropriate contract, you will be able to view the original RFR documents, and the contract award information which includes the winning Vendor's complete contract.

SOMWBA

The final Comm-PASS main menu option provides a link to the State Office of Minority and Women Business Assistance (SOMWBA) Web site. This site provides:

♦   An Overview of SOMWBA
♦   Directories of SOMWBA Certified Businesses
♦   Workshop Schedules
♦   The SOMWBA Newsletter
♦   A copy of Executive Order 237

The SOMWBA Directory provides a resource for identifying state certified Minority and Women owned business partners. Upon the installation of the enhanced directory in the Fall 1996, you will find it even easier to locate certified businesses for networking and partnering opportunities.

V. TROUBLESHOOTING TECHNIQUES FOR SOLVING ACCESS PROBLEMS

Many people never experience problems accessing the Internet. If you do experience difficulty, this portion of the guide should help you solve the most common problems.

The Three Ingredients to Successful Access

It takes the cooperation of your hardware and software, along with the online service that you connect to, to achieve Internet access. Below is a discussion of how to troubleshoot all three components, as well as suggestions as to who and when to call for help. In all cases we will attempt to point you to the best resource for getting you beyond your particular difficulties. Always remember, one of the primary rules of the Internet roadway:
"Ask, someone knows".

Navigating Comm-PASS

Hardware Headaches

The first line of defense against access problems is to check your computer-to-modem connection. If you have fax capability, and you are able to successfully send or receive a fax, then you know that the hardware is not the problem. If you cannot send/receive faxes, or if you don't have a fax capable modem, you need to check your physical connections.

First, save any open files and then turn everything off and check all of the cable connections to make sure that each one is firmly and correctly attached. Then turn the machine back on and try the access again. If the connections are sound, but you still have access problems, the issue may be your software setup. The next few paragraphs describe how to troubleshoot setup problems.

⇒ Please note, if you still cannot send/receive a fax you most likely have a hardware problem. Your best resource in this instance is either your hardware dealer or a computer servicing center or person. You may also call the Comm-PASS Help Desk at 1-888-MA-STATE. In calling, please keep in mind that there are an almost infinite number of hardware configurations. While we are glad to help where we can, in most cases the best resource for troubleshooting hardware issues is your hardware dealer.

Software Solutions

♦ *The Communications Program - or Comm Program*

Your PC cannot "talk to" another PC without properly configured communications software. If you access the Net via a general service provider, such as AOL or CompuServe, they provide you with their specific communications program. Otherwise, you most likely received communications software with your modem. In order to go online, you need to make sure that your PC is "speaking the same language" as the PC you are calling. Fortunately, there are a limited number of settings needed for successful communications.

First, you need to figure out how to enter the *communications settings*, also known as *communications parameters*, for your specific Comm Program. If you are using Windows, you will access the communication parameters by clicking on the Terminal icon found in the Accessories group. Next click on the Settings option, and then select Communications... (from the drop down menu). . You should now be at the Communications setting window, which will display options for Baud Rate, Data Bits, Parity, etc. Don't be worried, we'll help you through each setting! Fortunately most computers use the same settings, therefore, you will most likely only have to set them once.

♦ *The Communications Program (cont.)*

If you are not using Windows, you will want to look at the Help Documentation that you received with your modem, or call your Hardware Dealer for help. If you sign on with a general service ISP, their program will walk you through the configuration process during the program set-up. For everyone else, once you have accessed your Comm program, you will first check your baud rate, and if that doesn't help, the communications port that your PC is set to (MAC users don't have to worry about the COMM Port).

Baud Rate - refers to the speed of communications in "bits per second" or bps. When you set your baud rate you are in effect telling your modem the speed to use in sending and receiving information. You cannot set the baud rate higher than that supported by your modem, but you can reduce it to match a slower speed of a computer that you are connecting to. To access the Internet, set your baud rate to match your modem speed (9600, 14.4, 19.2 or 28.8).

Comm Port: - refers to the sockets on the back of the PC that support the flow of data to and from the machine (these ports include the monitor connection, keyboard connection, etc.). Two of these ports are *serial* or *communications ports*. Most communications programs are preset to communicate through Comm 1, which is a problem if that port is being used by other software, or by a serial hardware component. If you cannot get your modem to connect with your ISP, try changing your Communications Port setting from 1 to 2, or from 2 to 1 if it is already set at 2.

Setting the Bits - refers to the data bits, stop bits, and parity bits. You will only use one of two settings: 7 data bits, even parity, and 1 stop bit (7/E/1); or 8 data bits, no parity, and 1 stop bit (8/N/1). Start with the 8/N/1 setting since virtually everything uses this setting, and switch it if you are having problems connecting to your Internet Service Provider. If you are still having problems your ISP can help you with your settings.

Flow Control - is how your PC can tell a remote system to stop sending data when the buffer begins to overflow, and to begin sending when it can handle additional data. To select this feature set the Flow Control to: **Xon/Xoff**.

♦ ***Adobe Acrobat*®**

The Comm-PASS download files are published as Portable Document Files (PDF) that can be viewed and printed using the Adobe Acrobat Reader®. This software is similar to Microsoft Word® or other windows-based software, therefore, you can use it to read PDF files just as you would use Word to read document (DOC) files. Even better, Acrobat is shareware available via download from the Internet.

Adobe Acrobat® (cont.)

To access the Adobe Web site, either click on the underlined link available in the Comm-PASS solicitation and contract documents, or use the URL: **http://www.adobe.com/acrobat/.**

Upon accessing the site:

1. Click on the "Get Acrobat®" button, or on the Download Acrobat Reader! text.

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   3. Configure your Web Browser

Within each step are detailed instructions for downloading the software and setting up your browser. For additional information about using the software, or to find the Adobe Help Desk phone numbers, click on the README_Text icon that comes with the downloaded software.

Servicing Provider (ISP) Support

If your hardware connectivity is sound, and your software is configured correctly, you may be experiencing difficulties communicating with your Internet Service Provider (ISP). Perhaps you need a specific setting, or you don't have a valid local access phone number. Regardless of the cause, your ISP is your best resource for help. Most ISPs provide Help Desk support, and can quickly and easily guide you to successful access.

Online Help

Finally, always remember to try the online help that is available with most software and browser packages. It takes a little getting used to, but online help can save you time, energy, and trouble with the click of a button.

For those of you who need a little more Help, call us here at Comm-PASS at:

◆ *Hotline # - 1 (888) - MASTATE (627- 8283)*